

From:

Atari Exchange of Louisville
P.O. Box 34183
Louisville, Ky. 40232



AELien Transmissions!

Atari Exchange of Louisville's Information Exchange Newsletter

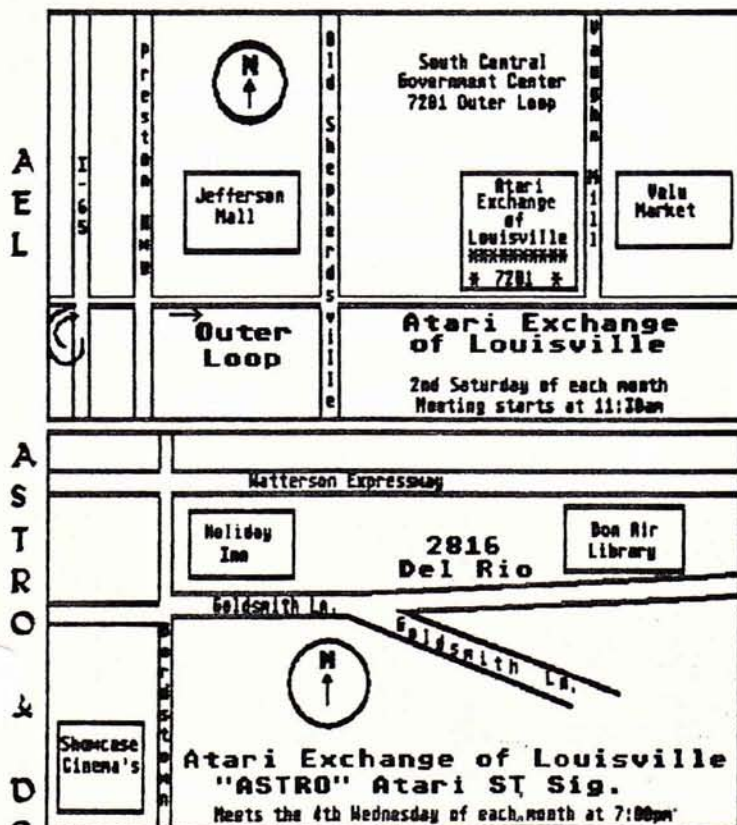
To:

San Leandro Computer Club
Newsletter Exchange
P.O. Box 1506
San Leandro, CA 94577

8708

September 1987

Atari Exchange of Louisville



Topic of the month:

Atariwriter Plus

Articles included:

Atariwriter Plus:
Screen Editing
Mail Merging the hard way
Using another DOS

Reviews:

Flash
Airball
Interlink ST
Regent Base

DC Sig meetings are the 1st Wednesday of the month 7:00pm at the Bon Air Library. An 8-bit Sig.

AELien Transmissions is published monthly by and for dues paying members of the Atari Exchange of Louisville. All contents are public domain (except advertisements) and available for duplication provided proper credit is given to the AEL and the author. AELien Transmissions is shared on an exchange basis with any other Atari User Group. A monthly subscription is available to nonmembers for \$8.75/year.

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Any dues paying member of the Atari Exchange of Louisville may submit an article to the editor for publication. The deadline for submission is the last Saturday of each month. Articles may be edited and/or published at the discretion of the editor. Articles are best handled when submitted on disk or uploaded via modem. Get them to Jack Link, 7501 Sunset Lane, Crestwood, KY 40014 or send to the Atari Exchange of Louisville's ATARI SCENE BBS at (502) 964-2924. AtariWriter, ST Writer or ASCII format is preferable.

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Contributing Editor:	<i>Charles Crowder</i>
AELien at Large:	<i>Paul Moore</i>

Business Meeting

The Business Meeting for the Atari Exchange of Louisville is held on the 2nd Saturday of each month at the Central Jefferson County Government Center, 7201 Outer Loop, Louisville KY. The library opens for returns at 11:00am and the meeting begins at 11:30am. Dues for one year are \$20.00 per person/family. Membership includes monthly issues of AELien Transmissions (not mailed), access to the AEL software library, and privileged access to the ATARI SCENE BBS.

DCSig Meeting

The DCSig meets on the 1st Wednesday of the month at the Bon Air Library, 2816 Del Rio Place at 7:00pm. This group is now becoming the place to discuss the Atari 8-bit computers.

ASTRO Sig Meeting

The ASTRO Sig meets to discuss the latest on the ST line of Atari computers. Meetings are held the 4th Wednesday of each month, at 7:00pm, at the Bon Air Library on 2816 Del Rio Place. For additional information contact Jack Link at (502) 241-6678 or on the ATARI SCENE BBS.

For the finest Atari Bulletin Board in Kentucky, call the Atari Exchange of Louisville's

ATARI SCENE BBS

(502) 964-2924



AELien **TRANSMISSIONS**

The Information Exchange Newsletter of the Atari Exchange of Louisville

President's Viewpoint

The low thick clouds gently smothered out the bright sun, creating a lazy, hazy Sunday as they slowly drift through the sky making their way toward the northeast. It was the kind of day that makes you want to drop the kids off at grandma's and go back home for a whole day of cat napping. That must have been what was happening in the neighborhood on Pagoda Drive, for the day was coasting along very peacefully and not even a snore could be heard from those numerous cat nappers.

Suddenly, at mid-day, the tranquil bliss was shattered like a delicate wine glass being hurled into a brick fireplace. A host of cars, all different makes and models, came to a sliding stop on Lloyd Bromwell's gravel driveway. When the gravel dust cleared you could see car doors fling open and then closed at a rate resembling hummingbird wings. From these cars, of all types, emerged droves of people in all types. There were little people and big people, slow people and fast people, quiet people and noisy people, some people were carrying food and some were carrying articles of clothing and some were fully dressed while others were wearing bathing suits.

Like different parts of a finely tuned machine they moved as a single unit. Together, as if they were a group of well trained Marines landing on a strategic area, the group conquered Lloyd's back yard. Possibly overwhelmed by the sheer numbers or maybe the precision in their actions, Lloyd ran into the house. But he was not able to cut off his escape route in time because the group managed to follow him in carrying all the food and clothing. When they came out

again almost everyone was wearing a swim suit, including Lloyd! Still moving with the precision of a well rehearsed dance team they swarmed the pool. It seemed as though they had one singular objective in mind... to splash all the water out of the pool. And Lloyd was helping! The beach ball in the pool had to be at least 4 foot across and they did everything to try and pop it. One guy, who looked like he had a mechanical pencil in his nose, kept hitting the giant beach ball out of the pool and waiting for someone else to get it and toss it back in. The whole time he was laughing so loud that he must have awakened every cat napper in the neighborhood.

After much of the water had been splashed out of the pool and some of the people had skin which started taking on the characteristics of a prune because of the time spent in the water, they all got out and gathered around Lloyd's kitchen table. After eating everything in sight, they all sat around the backyard, striking up small conversations and moaning about having eaten too much. Something was said about an 'AELien at Large' or was it a 'Large AELien'? There were bits and pieces mentioned about 'the AEL, computers, officers and Atari'. So that was it! This was an Atari computer club officers and families swim party and picnic. So that's why everyone looked like they were having a great time... THEY REALLY WERE!

I'd like to thank Lloyd Bromwell for having all of us over to his house. It was the perfect setting and he and Ginny were the perfect host and hostess. I'd also like to thank all of the officers and their families for attending and making it 'One Terrific Event!'.

Business Meeting Minutes

by Jody Estes

The meeting was called to order by our newly re-elected president, Don Garr, at 11:35 a.m. There were approximately 40 people in attendance for the August meeting. The officers hope to see an increase in attendance once fall arrives and the numerous conflicting activities of summer start to decline.

Don announced the decision of the officers in regards to meeting topics: each month we will pick one of the more popular programs for both the Atari 8-bit and ST computers and cover it in depth. In addition, there will be demonstrations of new and popular programs for our favorite computers. Along these lines, it was announced that this month's topic would be Turbo Basic (8-bit) and GFA Basic (ST) along with a demonstration of the new ST craze - Midi Maze. Future topics announced included: Atari Writer Plus/ST Writer, Synfile and Syncalc. Gary Brockie suggested we might include the popular 8-bit Express! terminal series of programs, and George Hines suggested Sparta DOS.

Don Garr next opened the floor to nominations for software purchases. The following programs were suggested as possible purchases:

Basic View - Don Garr
Battle Cruiser - Lloyd Bromwell
Easy Find Data Disks '83 & '84 -
Chyrel Oliver
PC Ditto - Jack Link (ST Library)

A vote was taken and decided that the club would purchase the Easy Find data disks, Battle Cruiser and PC Ditto. A decision on Basic View was put off until a future meeting.

The president then proceeded to cover the new mail that had arrived since the July meeting. The membership was advised that Current Notes is offering a group discount subscription of \$17.00 with a minimum of 6 members participating. Don also discussed an article received for

modifying the XL/XE computers so that a ramdisk could survive a cold start. Also announced was an offer from Atari to upgrade to an 800XL for \$35.00 and your old 600XL. In addition the membership was informed about the upcoming Atari Magic Show being put on in Warren, Michigan, the Font Partner program for use with Publishing Partner, and a new Atari Magazine, Monitor Magazine, was introduced.

Don then led the club in a discussion on possible fund raising events. This discussion was aimed at the goal of raising \$100-200 for the club's general treasury. While the topic (fund raiser) was strayed from frequently, the discussion was very active and informative. In this rather popular discussion, the following suggestions/ideas were discussed: membership drive; increasing new user privileges on the BBS; concern over the lack of retail Atari support; public domain disk given away at all meetings; generic disks sold at cost to members; text file put up on the BBS listing both original and PD software in the club's libraries; putting a membership application on-line on the BBS; hire an officer (cheap) for a days labor (suggested by an ex-officer); raffle; prizes for the person(s) selling the most raffle tickets...

Lloyd Bromwell offered his professional expertise/advise on the problem of line noise being experienced on the BBS by a few users. Lloyd also announced the presence of 21 new public domain disks in the PD Library. A current list of all disks/titles was available at the meeting for all members.

The membership was then entertained by a demonstration of Midi Maze on the ST. Jack Link and Charles Crowder provided this action packed demo and are to be thanked for lugging their computers into the meeting for the club's benefit.

The meeting was concluded with a very interesting and informative lecture on the new public domain program for the 8-bits, Turbo Basic. Don Garr presented an indepth review of this most powerful version of the Basic programming language.

Library Notes

by Chyrel Oliver

The first thing that I want to do this month is express my gratitude to Paul Moore for the excellent condition in which he left the library. Paul has done a superb job over the past two years, and he will be a hard act to follow.

For those of you who don't know much about me, here goes! I have been a teacher and/or librarian for the past eighteen and a half years and will soon begin my fifth year at Jeffersontown High School as one of two librarians. I have been an Atari since 1982 starting out more as a game-player. My first computer was stolen the day after I purchased it! But, I quickly replaced it with another one. Later, I purchased a 130XE which I still use. I have lived in Louisville for fourteen years and really feel like it is now home since I have lived here longer than anywhere else. I grew up in Western Kentucky in the Jackson Purchase, received a B.S. from David Lipscomb College in Nashville, Tennessee, an M. A. from Murray State University and an M.A. +30 at the University of Louisville. These are in Education and Library Science.

Considering the excellent way in which Paul organized and ran the library I see no reason to change anything, so the rules will stay the same. Copies will be available for you at the September meeting. However, due to the size of the library (and my car), I will only be bringing the following to each meeting: all disk programs, all cartridge programs, magazine/disk issues for 1987. If you wish any of the other materials from the library please call me at 491-2821 and I will be glad to fill your request. Due to the demands of my job, I cannot be available as much as Paul has previously been, but give me a call if I can be of assistance to you. (Make a note of that number since it is incorrect in the membership list.)

The library continues to grow with several donations last month:

Bob Gregory—Master Type

Todd Rufer—Katateka, Video Poker
and Speed King

Jerry Badger—6 issues of P C Magazine
Charles Vittitow—Jumpman Junior

Remember the library needs all donations. Even if it is a duplicate copy of a program we can still use it. It is very disappointing to not be able to check out a program because someone else has it. Duplicate copies just mean that more people get to check it out!

The following have programs that are overdue to the library: Joe Mattingly, Joe McFarland, Rod Starling and Jay Yepuri. If you see them remind them to return these programs as soon as possible. Don't forget to pick up your number card before the meeting.

I hope to see each of you at the meeting. If you have any comments or suggestions feel free to talk with me. Remember, keep those donations coming!

From the Editor

Judging by the response this first month, I am very encouraged with the response shown by the membership in providing informative articles for the newsletter. I was not only able to get this edition to print earlier than usual, we already have articles for future editions. Keep up the good work everyone! The following members contributed the articles you are enjoying this month:

Charles Crowder
Jody Estes
Don Garr
Rich Link
Chyrel Oliver
Todd Rufer

Reviews you will see in coming issues will include DeskCart for the ST and The Great American Road Race. If you have a new piece of software or hardware for your Atari computer and would like to share your opinions with the other members, put your thoughts on disk and get it to Jack Link for inclusion in your AELien Transmissions!

The AtariWriter Plus Editor

by Rich Link

The first thing that most people do when they start using a word processor is boot up and start typing. This is fine for simple documents, but the real power of a wordprocessor comes from powerful commands which can imitate all the difficult functions one does on a typewriter with only one key stroke. To start off this series on AtariWriter Plus, lets go right to the beginning with the Editor commands. The most used functions are those provide returns and move you around through the document.

RETURN - This puts a simple carriage return and advances the cursor one line.

CONTROL P - This combines the Return with an indentation for paragraphs.

TAB - Moves the cursor to the next tab setting.

SELECT T - Sends the cursor to the beginning of the document.

SELECT B - Sends the cursor to the end of a document.

CONTROL + ARROWS - These keys move the cursor around the screen editor just the way they do in Basic.

BackSpace - Backs up the cursor and erases the characters as it goes.

CONTROL A - Moves the cursor to the beginning of the line.

CONTROL Z - Moves the cursor to the end of the current line.

OPTION + UP & DOWN ARROWS - Pages the screen vertically up or down.

These commands will give you control enough to move around the screen and to view text. With just this small group of powerful keystrokes, you can imitate a typewriter for creating simple documents. But the beauty of a wordprocessor is in very special commands to manipulate text. The following allow the writer to rearrange text, delete large groups of sentences and move paragraphs from one place to another.

SHIFT DELETE - Deletes all text from the present cursor position to the end of the line.

SELECT DELETE - Deletes all text from the present position to the end of the FILE. (very drastic)

OPTION B - This marks a position in the text and combines with other commands to mark specific sections of the document. After you press this, as you move the cursor, text will be highlighted to show the area included.

OPTION DELETE - After the beginning of a passage is marked, this keypress combo will delete the marked section. The text is placed in a temporary buffer so that mistakes can be easily recovered.

OPTION X - Prints whatever is in the buffer starting at the present cursor position.

OPTION E - Marks the end of a block of text.

These commands can be combined to move or duplicate various sections of the file. For example, to move a paragraph to another position in a letter, you first mark and 'delete' the paragraph, placing it in the buffer. You then move the cursor to the spot where you want the paragraph to be and press **OPTION X**. The words reappear in the desired place. To duplicate a section many times, mark the beginning and end with **OPTIONS B** and **E**. Then position the cursor and press **OPTION X**. The marked section is replicated without erasing the original portion. There is one more situation we need to talk about and that is what to do when you want to correct mistakes in the body of a file or to add lines. Normally, you are in what is called the 'Insert Mode'. This means that whatever you type is inserted into the text. If you make a mistake, just use the delete functions to take out the offending words, reposition the cursor and start typing. The new characters will push all the rest of the file down. You may on occasion want to just type over a couple of transposed letters. You can enter the 'Type Over Mode' by pressing **CONTROL INSERT**. The window at the bottom will show the current mode. Repeated pressing of **CONTROL INSERT** will toggle between the two modes. If you are consistent in your mistakes (always misspelling the same word, for example) you can use the Search and Replace functions. To do this, first press **START S**. AtariWriter will ask you for the

string to be found. Pressing START R prompts you to put in the replacement phrase. Now press SELECT S. The program will start searching for the selected phrase and display the first occurrence. Pressing SELECT R inserts the corrected text. If you know there are many occurrences of one mistake, pressing OPTION G will exchange the new string for the old throughout the document. These are the major commands for the AtariWriter editor. With these you can control most of the normal functions of a typewriter. There are also specialized functions such as centering, headers, footers, underlining and sub/superscripts which can be handled by AtariWriter Plus. For these specialized commands, consult your owners manual.

Mail Merging the Hard Way

by Don Garr

I used Atariwriter Plus fairly extensively for approximately two years and did almost everything I can think of with it except for mail merging. I remembered seeing a section in the manual on it and since then I've done some mail merging in ST Writer. So I figured I was qualified enough to pull out the old manual, bone up just a little and write an article on the topic. Well here I am now, trying to write this article, driving down I-65 with my mouth hanging open and a size 10-1/2 shoved most of the way in.

I started writing on my way to Leitchfield one day before I had dug out the manual. I was going to begin by explaining the theory behind using a data base and how you would go about merging that data with Atariwriter Plus. Then I would look up the specific codes, in the manual, and plug them into the article. I almost completed the whole article before I finally pulled out the manual and went to the mail merging section. (I thought this was going to be pretty easy but No-o-o-o-o-o!) I can't figure out why they had to make it so complicated.

If you're performing mail merge routines then that would more than likely mean you're using data from an already established data base. You send letters to the people in

your data base, not create a data base to send letters out. Instead of capitalizing on the fact that you already have an established data base Atariwriter Plus requires you to use their limited built-in data base.

They don't allow you the use of more powerful resources like SynFile+ or File Manager 800. At this point I would like to strongly recommend the use of PaperClip for mail merging. It does allow you to print a text file to disk from SynFile+ and read it as your mail merge data. This is the way it should be done! Now that I got that off my chest I can get on with the article.

If you have your data typed into Atariwriter Plus's mail merge data base then you can perform a mail merge routine. The word processor will read field data from the data base when it encounters an OPTION-M character (which looks like a heart in your text). When you're typing out your letter, place an OPTION-M immediately followed by the number of the field desired.

Let's assume that:

Field 1= LAST NAME
Field 2= FIRST NAME
Field 3= STREET
Field 4= CITY
Field 5= STATE
Field 6= ZIP

Now let's construct a little sample mail merge letter:

OPTION-M2 OPTION-M1
OPTION-M3
OPTION-M4, OPTION-M5 OPTION-M6

Dear Mr./Mrs. OPTION-M1 <CR>

We'd sure like you to step forward and join the Atari Exchange of Louisville. For only \$20.00 per year it's the best accessory you'll buy for your computer.

Thank you,

Don Garr

The OPTION-M will appear as a heart and the number following it signals which field of each record in the data base will appear there. You'll notice that you can place more than one field of data on a line of text by combining OPTION-M commands and following the list with a <CR>. If my name were one of the names in the data base here's what the letter would look like:

*Don Gatt
7006 Applegate Lane
Louisville, Ky 40228*

Dear Mr./Mrs. Gatt

We'd sure like you to step forward and join the Atari Exchange of Louisville. For only \$20.00 per year it's the best accessory you'll buy for your computer.

Thank you,

Don Gatt

A letter for each record in the mail merge data base will be printed. If you have 20 records in your mail merge data base, then 20 letters will be printed.

That's about all I have to say about it. If you have very limited mail merging to do then you may like this approach. My mail merging needs require a more powerful data base but not everyone's needs are the same. I hope you found this article helpful and I wish you happy computing.

AtariWriter+ and other DOS's by Rich Link

One of the biggest disappointments about AtariWriter+ was that it was available only in DOS 2.5 format. Anyone with an Indus, USDoubler or Happy type drives has the potential for using double density, but was prevented from doing so by the limitations of Atari's DOS. Well, there's hope

for you lovers of a particular DOS. There is a simple way to increase your disk capacity, if you want to be able to read and write DD disks. First, you can simply boot up your favorite DOS (MyDos, TopDOS, SpartaDOS etc.) without BASIC and Binary Load the file AUTORUN.SYS from the original AtariWriter+ disk. As long as you are using the original disk, it should load normally but you will have the capability of reading from DD disks.

There is one problem here, though. One of the advantages of using SpartaDOS on an Indus or a USD equipped 1050 is the access to high speed read/write. When loading the AtariWriter+ disk, these higher load speeds will crash the loading process. This is part of Atari's protection scheme. There is no easy way around this problem short of rewriting the copy protection scheme used.

I have tested a few of the more prevalent DOSes with AtariWriter+. This is how they worked with the method described above.

MyDOS 4.0 - Loaded normally, but hung up momentarily after loading the RS232 handler.

TOPDOS 1.2 - Appears to load and run correctly, but I noticed that some characters were 'redefined'.

DOSXL - Loaded the program, but reset to a blank screen with the cursor.

SpartaDOS - Loads and runs correctly, but the format function doesn't work properly.

DOS 2.0 - Works and loads properly.

As you can see, using another DOS can give some benefits, but everything isn't free. You can expect some minor bugs from using the foreign operating system. There is also a method of putting another DOS on the AtariWriter disk itself. This can be accomplished, but I recommend having a friend copy your original onto another disk using a duplicating program like Happy. Then, boot your preferred DOS, insert the backup copy of AtariWriter Plus and write DOS to the disk. You must have a smart DOS (able to read and change densities) or you will be locked into the original SD mode.

I tried using MyDOS 3.08 and could not read a DD disk directory. You cannot use SpartaDOS since the directory information and format are totally different from that of DOS 2.5. Experimentation is the best answer here. Use a backup copy and try them until you find one that works.

It's a shame that Atari has put users in such a predicament. The advantages of having a high speed/DD system are tremendous. To give an example of what could have been, I used a modified AtariWriter Plus and SpartaDOS on a Happy drive with USD Emulator engaged. The normal AtariWriter on a 1050 took 45.6 seconds from the start of loading to the time when the command screen appears. With the modified hi-speed system, the screen was ready in 25.3 seconds. Plus, a Startup file turned off BASIC. All density disks could be read or written. Of course, this same system could be installed on a hard disk or in an MIO ramdisk for 'instantaneous' access. At best, modifying the DOS on AtariWriter Plus is a band-aid solution. I personally feel that the partial solution isn't really worth the effort!

STate of the Software Art

by Charles E. Crowder Jr.
ASTRO Contributing Editor

This month I'll look at several different programs for the ST in several categories. In the communications area will be Flash! and the Flash Accessory, while for the games section I will be looking at Airball, & DBMan for the databases.

FLASH v.1.12

REMOTE CONTROL ACCESSORY &
KERMIT PROTOCOL v.2.0

Early on, the ST had several terminal programs, ranging from the poor to ok. Some were public domain, a few were commercial, and there was the VT52 emulator that came with every ST, but lacked any kind

of file transfer ability. Some of these were fairly good, most were poor, but they all had one thing in common, they made no use of the GEM interface at all. Then came FLASH! from Antic's Catalog. It was reasonably priced, not copy protected, was loaded with bells & whistles, could use macros and script files to automate logons and common tasks and best of all, it made use of the GEM interface in a logical manner. It was an instant hit.

FLASH! allows the user to automate his telecommunications operations to as much an extent as he wishes. The program has two windows, the terminal mode - where all communications activities take place, and a capture buffer screen where all activities involving the GEM interface occur. On the latter screen, you can edit a message to be u/l'd, using the built in text editor, activate the file transfer, use desk accessories, and edit script files (called 'DO' files in FLASH!). The text editor is almost a full word processor, with search & replace, text buffering, undo, and several other text features. From the terminal screen, you can monitor your activities online, and using the function keys or 'HOT' keys (Alt-key combinations) activate commands or send common commands to the other system.

FLASH! has a full range of file transfer protocols, lacking only the more recent developments, such as Y-modem Batch, F-modem, etc. This is not as bad as it sounds since FLASH! allows for the use of desk accessories. In fact, a Y-modem Batch accessory already exists and more should follow. You are allowed to set the X-modem protocol to either Checksum for most 8-bit boards or Cyclic Redundancy Checking (CRC) for those boards that use it and to increase the block size from 128 bytes to 1 Kilobyte for those systems that support the Y-modem protocol. ASCII allows you to u/l messages, send text to the capture buffer for editing, set the prompt for transmission, the type of protocol to use (XON/XOFF, DC2/DC4, etc), and several other factors.

FLASH! can emulate several different systems through its built-in emulation and the use of Translation tables. FLASH! is set

up for ATARI (VT52), VIDTEX (Compuserve), and ANSI (VT100). Only the Atari VT52 mode is a full emulation. It also contains some Atari extensions to the VT52 ESC codes that allow for the transmission of color. The Vidtex mode can be used on Compuserve or FoReM BBS (such as Louisville's Twilight Zone) to view on-line RLE (Run Length Encoded) graphics and FLASH Color Pictures. The ANSI VT100 emulator is the least useful, designed mainly for interaction with mini and mainframe systems. It is only a partial emulation, lacking many of the VT100's features.

It is in the area of emulating other systems though that makes FLASH! unique. Interlink ST is the only other terminal program that I know of that has the ability to use translation tables. These tables don't allow for the specialized graphics of the other systems (such as the Atari XE ATASCII graphics), but it allows the other system to run in its native mode and still recognize the basic items, such as carriage returns, etc., while FLASH! will recognize the input data properly.

The last item covered here is the REMOTE CONTROL ACCESSORY and KERMIT PROTOCOL. This is a combination of mini-BBS/answering machine (computer only, no voice), and Kermit file transfer protocol. The mini-BBS can act as an message unit for you or others to call in and leave messages, u/l and d/l files, etc. It can be password protected against unauthorized entry and can take the place of a regular BBS program although it is prone to crashes.

The REMOTE CONTROL ACCESSORY also adds the Kermit File Transfer Protocol to Flash!. It allows for single file or batch transmission of several files. The process is completely automated in the batch mode as the system transmits the name of the files as it sends them, error checks the transmission, opens and closes the files, and leaves the user feeling kind of useless until it finishes. It is a good addition to a fine terminal program, although few BBS's use it.

Rating: FLASH! - ****

Remote Control Accessory
and Kermit Protocol - ***

AIRBALL

For those of you who have been waiting for Electronic Arts to decide whether or not it will release a version of Marble Madness for the ST (how hard can it be?), you can console yourself with a new offering from England called Airball.

The object of the game is to move the ball around a dungeon collecting specific objects, such as a spellbook. Along the way you will also be able to collect gold and gems (these are worth points). You will also be faced with several obstacles, ranging from stairs to bounce up and down, to pits to bounce over. Be careful though, each bounce uses some of your air pressure (thus the name Airball), making it harder to jump as far. Spikes, maces, needle floors, etc, abound and makes the game a real challenge.

The graphics are excellent, making full use of the ST's abilities in color and design. Everything is clear and it is easy to tell what an object is without squinting or referring to the rulebook. Add to this the 2 serpent dragons that coil and shift continuously while play continues, and you have the makings of an excellent graphics extravaganza.

The sound aspect is not ignored either. Music plays while the game loads and continues during play. Sound effects are well done, ranging from the pumping of air into the ball, to the sound of a punctured airball flying around the screen.

Control is excellent. You are offered the choice of using the keyboard, mouse, or joystick. The joystick is the preferred method of play although it is left up to the player.

If you buy just one game this year, buy AIRBALL. It will hook you immediately and you won't want to stop playing.

Rating: *****

Interlink-ST

'The Terminal Communications Solution'
Reviewed by: Todd Rufer

If you are looking for the best terminal package for the ST computer, buy Interlink-ST. Yes, it's that good. Interlink has reset the standard that Flash! once held. Interlink-ST was written by Randy Mears and is distributed by Intersect Software Corporation. Randy first worked on implementing Xmodem protocol back in 86 with several PD terminal programs. Since then I guess he has been hiding away writing this program.

For some strange reason, I couldn't get Interlink to receive a file from The Atari Scene, but uploading was no problem. Interlink supports 3 file transfer protocols inside the program itself (Xmodem, Ymodem and ASCII), plus has a selector box labeled ??? which will let you load in transfer protocols from disk. The same goes for emulation terminals. VT-52 graphics and straight ASCII translation are included, plus on my Interlink disk was an emulation file that lets me emulate ATASCII graphics. These transfer and emulation files are being uploaded to the national networks as soon as they are developed. I think the problem with receiving files from The Scene is the way Interlink switches while using Xmodem and Ymodem. First it starts as a CRC transfer, then switches to checksum Xmodem. Despite the problems with downloading from The Atari Scene, I have no problems with receiving files from Genie or Delphi.

Interlink includes a very nice feature. The program will allow you to turn on a recorder that will record every command you choose. Then the file may be played back at various speeds or at a selected time! Yes, you could set it to call The Atari Scene, capture the new messages, then log off at 3AM. Setting screen color is done within the program and also has a command for 'Quick Draw', which will turn off the GEM draw routines (opening and closing windows). Another nice feature is an option that will allow you to password protect your dialing menu. If active, the program will ask for the password when you boot the program. If it is entered wrong and

someone tries to dial a board, they will be in for quite a surprise. It will scramble all of your auto-logon data, plus your function key settings. The password protection is really only needed if you are using it in a business environment or if you simply want to be sure nobody else knows your passwords. You do not need to use this option.

And there is one last feature that will surely convince you to purchase the program. Included in the program is a mini-BBS! It allows for 3 levels of password protection plus uploading and downloading using either Xmodem or Ymodem. You can also leave messages to the SYSOP or go into an online chat. Remember your record mode? Well, just think of the possibilities, you could set up a record file that would turn on your mini-bbs and allow others to call your computer at night while you are sleeping. The program works with either a color or monochrome system and if using monochrome, lets you choose 48 lines per screen.

You can run other programs from inside the Interlink program via it's built in shell utility. I have successfully ran ARCSHELL while I was still online a bbs, but I really don't know about larger programs. Intersect has a support bbs that contains over 100 megs of ST files, plus online support for registered owners.

As you can see, this program is highly recommended. I ordered directly from the company and paid \$42.00. Most large mail-order houses should have this program in stock (don't fool with Black Patch!) and probably at a reduced price. Pick up your copy today, you'll be glad ya did.

Be sure to call David Brown's

TWILIGHT ZONE BBS

(502) 456-4403

FoReM ST 300-1200 24 hrs.
20meg online

September 1987

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
		1	2 Wed DCSig 7:00	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12 Business Meeting 11:30
13	14	15	16 Officer's Meeting 7:00	17	18	19
20	21	22	23 ASTRO Sig 7:00	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Regent Base

by Jody Estes

Having had very little experience on other ST database programs, this article is intended to be a review of the features of Regent Base as opposed to a comparison of it's features to the likes of dBase and Zoomracks.

Regent Base is one of the very first database programs that was written expressly for the Atari ST. Unlike some others that are more or less ports of programs written for the IBM and other popular computers, Regent Software sought to utilize fully the particular capabilities and power of the ST by writing Regent Base from scratch. Regent Base takes advantage of the GEM environment through its excellent use of windows, pull down menus, and mouse control.

Regent Base provides the power of a "relational database language" while making it easy to use through it's GEM utilization and the presence of a menu program which will list all programs, databases and forms contained on your working disk. From the menu program you merely use the mouse to select the item you want to load, and when you are through, Regent Base will take you back to the menu program for further selections. You can even select to enter Regent Word (Regent Software's word processor program - sold separately) from the menu program if you so desire.

One rather nice feature of Regent Base is its menu bar which allows desk accessories to be run while the "forms processor" is running a form. This option is not recommended on the 520 ST with 1/2 meg of RAM, however, as the accessories will eat up too much of the needed RAM for program operations. This does give the 1 meg ST owner the opportunity to be otherwise entertained while the form processor is running. The manual warns, however, that the "sequel editor" mode of the forms processor will not respond correctly to the event messages generated by the opening and sizing of accessory windows. While the forms processor will never lose information or damage a form by running a desk accessory, the 'screen' may become infested with extraneous graphic characters from the desk accessory.

The Regent Base program disk contains two complete forms, namely a mail list manager and a checkbook program. These are very useful to the first time user in learning how to navigate Regent Base. Similarly, I found the manual to be written from the

assumption of NO knowledge of data base programs and computers in general. Even the first time computer buyer cannot go wrong with this program if the manual is read thoroughly and its instructions followed correctly.

The real "brains" of Regent Base are its command set (needed in any relational database language). Regent Base uses real ENGLISH commands and the user, having had a little programming experience (even in Basic), will have no trouble using the commands. The procedural commands are broken down into four categories: (1) Define - used to create database tables; (2) Query - used to manipulate information within the database tables; (3) Control - used to effect program flow and operation; and (4) Format - used to manipulate header and footer definitions, line formatting, print control, etc. The set is fairly complete including most commands you'll need for the likes of math functions, record updates, text appending strings, selective replacement and record deletion. Fields in the database can be defined in several ways, including: alphanumeric, text only, dates, integer and decimal. There are also commands, which through the setup of only selected fields to search on, can greatly speed up the search and retrieval of data.

I could go on and on and never adequately cover all of the powerful features of Regent Base and having had the program for less than one month, I am still very much the enthusiastic beginner. Let me conclude by saying that for the list price of \$99.95 (can be found cheaper through mail order) Regent Base is a very wise choice for both the beginner and more experienced database programmer.